

**Celebrating Transition
and a move from Tom Kelly Road Flats to Ffrench Mullen House**



Photo of Tom Kelly Road Flats 1970s and 2017
Archive and P. Gergahty



Almost fifty years ago the first families moved to Tom Kelly Road Flats. Last November 3rd 2017, at the moment when the winter sun set, a unique cultural journey happened with some of those first families - others who came later – and with children and grandchildren. The community came together to mark their transition to the newly built 79 social housing units in Ffrench Mullen House on Dublin's Charlemont Street; to remember the good times, the hard days and the values still keep the community connected.

Just as darkness set-in, a group of 50 friends were led out by a music group from the Charlemont Community Resource Centre . Some carried the thirty specially created community portrait banners printed with an individual wish for the future. The idea for the portraits and transition event came out of summer exchanges and workshops facilitated by community artists, Ed Carroll and Vita Gelūnienė. Community members active in the Development Group and Circle of Friends really helped to conceive how to mark, in an intimate way, the lived lives coming in the soon to be demolished Tom Kelly Road Flats. Families spoke about their hopes and fears and many agreed to be photographed. The Resource Centre Manager, Trish Brennan, the Health and Wellbeing Coordinator, Una Rafferty and the Regeneration Board Coordinator, Lyndsey Anderson were always there to bring the ideas to fruition. Throughout, Dublin City Council's Eileen Martin and Sara Bermingham lent valuable support too.

Don't underestimate how hard it was to get buy-in for a cultural walk in the days when people were signing contracts, getting keys, packing-up; the nervousness in the air. Yet, the creative walk offered a break, for time to stop and remember what a really significant achievement has occurred – 12 years of waiting and Dublin's first social housing of 2017.



Photo: Paula Geraghty

It has taken a very long time, and the last 12 years in particular were tough, when it was on again and off again, but look at where we are now." Fiona Hanlon





Photo: Paula Geraghty

"As one light goes out another is lit and the spirit goes on. Trish Brennan



The community srolled slowly towards the back block and gathered circled around to sing the first song prompted by the music group trio of Brian Fleming, Eoghan Scott and Kieran Gallagher. Eoghan himself grew up in Charlemont and his family are well remembered. Then we walked around to the next block and assembled around the Cherry tree and aptly listened to Eoghan version of John Spillan's *The Dance of the Cherry Tree*. Backed by a lovely chorus of neighbours, what ringed out in the night air touched a pulise.

*We travelled all around the sun, it's taken us 12 years, well done!
Well done everyone! Well done! On behalf of the cherry trees,
well done everyone.*

Jackie Brady, Chair of the Redevelopment Group, said a few words and reminded us all how much neighbours loved the old flats and its neighbours who will now bring something really positive into the new homes. Then we strolled together to the front block alongside Charlemont Street and stood with buiders lights from the new homes in the background.

After a quick prompt, Antoinette Carroll recited her own poem, [Heart and Soul](#), written some years ago as her reflection on family and community life in Charlemont. It's filled with personal recollections and images that triggered memories even some that that had been forgotten.

Then, the families continued around to the small island in front of the second block and gathered to sing Dublin in the Rare Auld Times. Trish Brennan spoke about what the Resource Centre meant to the life of the community. She will be supported and working with Eileen Martin from Dublin City Council to make the new Centre was there too ublin City Council's And all the while, the children and teenagers looked, listened and sang along knowing that this was a night that they would recall to their children.

To end those who gathered were drawn back into the belly of Charlemont, to the Resource Centre for a good cup of tea and a chance to be at home together for the last time under Tom Kelly Road Flats.





Photo: Paula Geraghty

It captures the sentimental nature of the night when the creativity and art work and community spirit are put to use marking a really important historical movement. Brian Fleming



The last word is one of thanks to:

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Now that the lights have gone off in Tom Kelly Road Flats and have been turned-on in French Mullen House it's still important to creatively imagine the new Resource Centre and sense of place. Through an application made by [Blue Drum](#), the community arts organisation and supported by the Resource Centre, Ed and Vita have been selected by Dublin City Council Arts Office to continue their engagement during the transition period. What this means is that some work can continue in terms of facilitating the Community Culture Strategy and its actions listed for 2018 like

- 1) Production of Place – cocreation of a beautiful, sustainable living space;
- 2) Programming arts workshops for activation of residents.

